

VZCZCXYZ0012
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAAH #1059/01 2741133
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 011133Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9470
INFO RUEHFT/AMCONSUL FRANKFURT 3405
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMCSSU/FBI WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001059

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR S/CT KEN MCCUNE
PASS NCTC
PASS TO DHS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [KVPR](#) [KHLS](#) [CVIS](#) [ASEC](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: ASHGABAT RESPONSE TO CALL FOR INFORMATION-HOST
GOVERNMENT DATA COLLECTION PROCESSES

REF: STATE 133921

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) Please find below post's responses to the information requested reftel. Watchlisting - The government of Turkmenistan maintains a law enforcement-based watch list against which the names of incoming Turkmen citizen passengers are checked at the port-of-entry (POE). Agencies contributing to this list are the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of National Security (MNB), and the Agency for the Registration of Foreign Citizens. Prior to traveling to Turkmenistan, foreign citizens are subjected to a rigorous visa application/letter of invitation process through the Agency for the Registration of Foreign Citizens, during which time their names are vetted against this list.

¶3. (SBU) Traveler Information Collection - Passports are required for all passengers in Turkmenistan, including those on domestic flights. Some areas of Turkmenistan, particularly the border regions, are restricted and require additional permission from the government before a foreign citizen may travel there. Information is collected on travelers by the Border Police on both domestic and international flights, and in the case of foreign citizens, by the Agency for the Registration of Foreign Citizens. The central law enforcement database described in paragraph one is available to immigration officers at the port of entry, in electronic form at the Ashgabat airport and in printouts at other border crossings. The government maintains strict controls on entry for foreign nationals, the government has ample opportunity to evaluate names of foreign citizens traveling to Turkmenistan well in advance of the individual's arrival. Information collected is not shared with foreign governments and information sharing is limited within the Turkmenistan government, although it is believed that the Agency for Registration of Foreign Citizens shares information extensively with the MNB.

¶4. (SBU) Biometric systems - There are no biometric systems in use for passenger data collection in Turkmenistan and no plans to install such equipment or collect such data at this time.

¶5. (SBU) Passports - Turkmenistan issues a machine readable passport with a digital photograph to every citizen when he or she turns 16 years old. There are no biometric data included in the passport, which, uniquely, has no expiration date. Replacement passports are issued with full validity, and lost or stolen passports are canceled in a database that

is available electronically at Ashgabat airport and in printouts at other border crossings. As the passport is used by the Turkmenistan government as the primary form of identification and as an internal residence permit within Turkmenistan for all Turkmen citizens, replacements are very difficult to obtain. To obtain a replacement, a Turkmen citizen must apply for a replacement at a Ministry of Interior passport office and prove his or her own existence with a long list of difficult-to-obtain civil registry documents, school, work and police certificates, tax documentation and real estate transaction records, and affidavits from neighbors and coworkers stating that the person lives and works where he or she claims. Replacement passports are believed to be issued out of the same number series as all regular passport issuances. Post has encountered one case in the past year of an applicant changing his date of birth on his passport in what appears to have been an attempt to defeat CLASS name checks on past non-immigrant visa refusals. It is believed that he changed his original birth certificate obtained through legal channels an entire new set of civil documents in order to do so. Post has not seen any increase in the use of replacement passports.

¶6. (SBU) Fraud Prevention - Fraud prevention efforts at passport offices are not robust, but the sheer number of regulations and difficulty obtaining replacement passports is believed to defeat many attempts to fraudulently procure new passports. The passport agency has access to "Form Number One," a civil registry document maintained by the Ministry of Interior, which is created at the required registration of a Turkmen citizen with authorities at his or her 16th birthday. This form registers the personal data of that citizen, to include a lifetime of residency and changes of residency, marriages, divorces, crimes, military service, tax

information and real estate transactions, and includes photos of the citizen that are taken by law every 10 years. When an individual loses a passport, he or she must gather and submit again all the documentation listed in paragraph five, which is checked against the data in "Form Number One."

¶7. (SBU) Privacy and Data Security - As the process to obtain a visa or letter of invitation (LOI) to Turkmenistan is rigorous, detentions at the point of entry are rare. Post is aware of one instance in which a U.S. citizen arrived at the airport in Ashgabat without a visa or LOI. The individual was detained for nearly 12 hours before the government decided to grant that person entry to the country. See paragraph 11 for more information regarding detentions.

¶8. (SBU) Data Collection at POEs - Turkmenistan's Agency for the Registration of Foreign Citizens uses its own software to collect information on foreign citizens. This software is available at all border crossings, each of which has a satellite uplink. The database is updated every three days.

¶9. (SBU) Watchlist system in use - The Turkmenistan government uses a law enforcement-based internal watch list referred to in paragraph two. It is unclear if international watch list data are included on the internal list, which is not shared with other countries, or with other government ministries/agencies.

¶10. (SBU) Identifying Partners - The secretive nature of the Turkmenistan government, as well as political realities in Turkmenistan, are unlikely to make the country a suitable partner for entering into a biometric data-sharing agreement with the USG at this time. Turkmenistan passed a law defining terrorism and establishing mandatory prison sentences for those found to be engaging in such acts after an alleged assassination plot against then-President Niyazov in November 2002. One of those arrested in the plot was a U.S. citizen; post was given no notification of the arrest by the Turkmenistan government. Instead, post learned about the arrest nearly a week after the fact from family members of the individual. Post was then denied consular access for nearly six weeks after the arrest occurred.

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